

**Fungal Infections of the Skin**

(Ringworm, Athlete's foot, Jock itch)

What are fungal infections of the skin?

These are skin infections caused by a family of fungi. The most common types of infection are ringworm, athlete's foot and jock itch.

Who is at risk for fungal infections?

Anybody can be infected. People who work around animals and livestock are at greater risk for ringworm. People who frequently use public showers and locker rooms, such as at gymnasiums and fitness centers, are at increased risk for athlete's foot, and males who wear tight-fitting clothing or who have athlete's foot are at increased risk for jock itch.

What are the symptoms of fungal infections?

Ringworm can appear as circular red scaly patches on areas of the skin that are not hairy. Athlete's foot is similar in appearance but occurs on the feet, especially around and between toes. Jock itch occurs in the genital and upper thigh area. In all three types of infections, the person may experience extreme itching.

How soon do symptoms appear?

It is not known how long it takes for symptoms to develop after infection.

How are fungal infections spread?

This group of fungi is spread by direct skin-to-skin contact, or by direct contact with contaminated skin cells or hairs that are shed. Transmission also may occur by sharing towels.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?

People can spread these fungal infections for as long as the infection is present. However, it is unknown how long the fungus may persist on contaminated materials.

How is a person diagnosed?

Visual inspection or laboratory tests can be used to diagnose infections. Consult with your health-care professional.

What is the treatment?

Your health-care provider can prescribe anti-fungal medications.

Does past infection make a person immune?

No.

Should children or others be excluded from day care, school, work or other activities if they have fungal infections?

No. Children with ringworm can attend child-care as long as they are being treated and the affected skin can be covered. However, all people with fungal infections should be excluded from certain activities that are likely to expose others to the fungus, such as using swimming pools, showers, towels at public gyms, etc.

What can be done to prevent the spread of fungal infections?

Hand washing is very important!! Good hand hygiene should be practiced before and after treating or touching the infected area. Also, treatment will help shorten the time the infection can be spread. With most fungal infections, the general recommendations would include treating infected people early, keeping infected area clean, avoiding direct contact with skin lesions, avoiding public areas where the infection can spread easily (e.g., swimming pools, gym showers) and maintain proper foot hygiene. People who are infected and who care for patients should notify their supervisors of their infection.

Additional Information:

Additional information is available by calling the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

Resource: American Academy of Pediatrics. In: Pickering LK, ed. *Red Book: 2006 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases*. 27th ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2006: [658-660]

